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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Ninth-annual Youth-to-Youth conference held at Camp Rapid

By Spc. Andrew Turner, 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

RAPID CITY, S.D. – A positive buzz on Camp Rapid has teenagers from across South Dakota energized. The ninth-annual Youth-to-Youth conference was held Nov. 13-15 at Camp Rapid with the support of the South Dakota Army National Guard Counterdrug Program.

Youth-to-Youth is a peer-based drug and alcohol prevention program that gives teenagers a chance to come together and take a stand against drug use.

Youth-to-Youth is an extra-curricular activity in many South Dakota middle schools and high schools, according to Sgt. 1st Class Kristi L. Palmer, a coordinator for the Guard's Drug Demand Reduction Program. She added that the conference is a youth led, adult guided and drug free conference that students from 18 different schools volunteer to attend.

"The youth do everything," said Palmer. "They make the agendas, determine guest speakers and set up the activities. The adults are primarily here for logistics."

The conference encompasses more than promoting a drug-free life as it also focuses on teaching teenagers important life skills.

Teenagers are taught about the importance of goal setting, decision making and consequences, explained Palmer. They also learn about and the science behind the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol.

Most importantly, students gain confidence to say no to drugs and alcohol.

"We're giving them the tools to say no and to be OK with that," said Palmer.

In addition to learning life skills, teenagers make new friends in various groups during the conference's fun-packed activities.

"Everyone splits into family groups of 15 people," said Dani Adams, a youth staff member and senior from Rapid City Central High School. "Kids who don't know anybody here get to know their family group. It helps overcome nervousness."

Family group members connect with each other through discussion and games, according to Adams. With so many young men and women coming together, attendees can make lasting relationships with friends made at the conference.

"Friendships truly do extend outside of the conference," said Adams.

Coordinators believe the lessons and friendships gained will hopefully be shared with peers in various communities throughout South Dakota. They hope the positive energy among friends and families will create interest for next year's conference.

"Enrollment has increased from less than 100 to about 200," said Adams. "Everyone is telling their friends about it."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact Maj. Orson Ward at (605) 737-6721, cell (605) 431-8753



081115-A-8517T-001: RAPID CITY, S.D. – After realizing he just fell for a prank, Sheldon Zelfer smears a banana on Timmy Grimmatt, both from Wall, on Nov. 15, 2008, during the Youth-to-Youth conference at Camp Rapid. The Youth-to-Youth conference is a peer-based drug and alcohol prevention program. (Army photo by Spc. Andrew Turner)(RELEASED)

Link to photo: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/11152008-A-8517T-001.jpg>



081115-A-8517T-002: RAPID CITY, S.D. – The Youth-to-Youth staff is recognized on stage Nov. 15, 2008, at the end of the conference held at Camp Rapid. Youth staff spends much of its time preparing for the young participants to ensure the conference is a success in hopes that even more youth will participate next year. (Army photo by Spc. Andrew Turner)(RELEASED)

Link to photo: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/11152008-A-8517T-002.jpg>



081115-A-8517T-003: RAPID CITY, S.D. - Participants of the Youth-to-Youth conference are blindfolded for a banana eating contest on Nov. 15, 2008, in the Duke Corning Armory at Camp Rapid. Youth-to-Youth empowers students with knowledge of how to make better choices, specifically in refusing drugs and alcohol. (Army photo by Spc. Andrew Turner)(RELEASED)

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